



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

**Region 1
490 N. Meridian Road
Kalispell, MT 59901**

**MOUNT SILCOX WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA
FOREST HABITAT PROJECT DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
DECISION NOTICE
July 2017**

Description of the Proposed Action

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to conduct a forest habitat enhancement project on 92 acres of the Mount Silcox Wildlife Management Area (MSWMA). The proposed project would improve aspen habitats; enhance or create openings in the forest canopy to increase bunchgrass and woody browse production; promote development of diverse, multi-story stand structure favored by sensitive species including Cassin's finch, Clark's nutcracker, evening grosbeak, Lewis's woodpecker, pileated woodpecker, and varied thrush; and implement forestry treatments that mimic ecological processes, promote development of ecologically site-appropriate habitat conditions, and reduce the susceptibility of forests to uncharacteristic disturbance events (such as stand replacement fires and bark beetle epidemics). FWP would use a combination of treatments including timber harvest, hand thinning, and prescribed burning to accomplish these objectives.

Under Alternative B, the proposed action of the MSWMA Forest Habitat Project Draft Environmental Assessment (EA), FWP would implement the following activities on the MSWMA:

- Timber harvest and hand thinning on 92 acres of conifer and aspen/mixed-conifer forest.
- Broadcast burning on 7 acres of aspen/mixed-conifer forest.
- Road maintenance on 4 miles of existing road.
- Submerchantable material generated from timber harvesting would be reduced to a level that meets or exceeds Montana's State Hazard Reduction Law through piling and burning.
- Spot herbicide treatments along roads, log landings, and disturbed areas for up to 3 years post-treatment.

Public Involvement

FWP is required by MEPA to assess potential impacts of its proposed actions to the human and physical environments; evaluate those impacts through an interdisciplinary approach, including public input; and make a decision based on this information. FWP released a draft EA for public review of the MSWMA Forest Habitat Project for a 30-day public comment period from June 5 through July 5, 2017.

FWP posted a public notice on its webpage (<http://fwp.mt.gov>), a legal notice was placed in *The Sanders County Ledger* local newspaper, and the draft EA was available at the FWP Thompson

Falls Resource Office. Additionally, notice of this draft EA was distributed to neighboring landowners and interested parties.

Summary of Public Responses

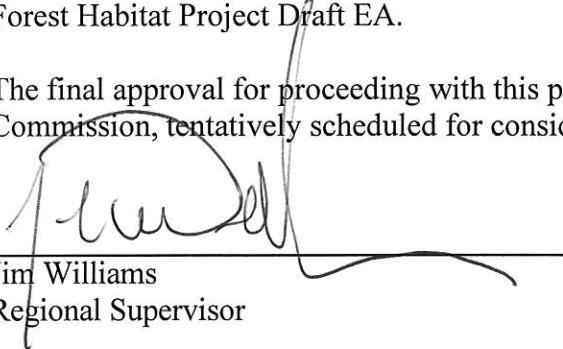
FWP received 2 responses to the draft EA. The responses were positive and in support of the proposed action.

Decision

Based upon the draft EA and the applicable laws, regulations, and policies, I have determined that the proposed action will not have measurable negative effects on the human and physical environments associated with this project. Therefore, I conclude that the EA is the appropriate level of analysis and the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is unnecessary.

In reviewing all the public comments and other relevant information, and evaluating the environmental effects, I hereby approve Alternative B, the proposed action of the MSWMA Forest Habitat Project Draft EA.

The final approval for proceeding with this proposed project is by the Fish and Wildlife Commission, tentatively scheduled for consideration at their August 2017 meeting.



Jim Williams
Regional Supervisor

7/7/17

Date